When you write a **personal response to literature**, or when you **critique** or **evaluate** a piece of writing, you share your thoughts and feelings about the **value or worth of a text** you have read. As reading specialist Louise Rosenblatt says, “A personal response communicates something about the feelings, sensations, images, and ideas a reader weaves between herself [or himself] and a text.”

Plan your response by answering the following questions ***thoroughly*** and ***thoughtfully*** on **your own paper**:

Title of novel (this is a novel, so your title will be *italicized* in your typed copy; underlined when it’s handwritten):

Author:

What is the novel about? (**Summarize** the text in a few sentences, and think big picture—theme.)

What did you like about this novel? **Why** did you like it? **Be specific**!

What didn’t you like about it? **Why** did you dislike it? **Be specific**!

Which, if any, characters could you identify with? **Be specific**!

Whether you actually liked it or not, what was the most challenging part of the story for you to understand?

If you were the teacher, would you teach this story again next year? Explain.

What feeling comes to mind when you think of this piece of writing?

Any other comments you would like to make about the story?

After reading through your planning, decide on a focus for your personal response. Do you want to explore one or more of the questions you have about the text or share your feelings about it? Simply stating that something was “good” or “bad” is not enough. You need to support your feelings with thoughtful explanations and **specific references** to the book itself. Remember that you need a **controlling statement**, great **support**, **organized paragraphs**, varied **sentence structure**, strong **word choice**, and **mechanically correct** writing as well as a **voice** that is your own and shows ownership of this critique! **Do NOT** just list all of the answers to the questions above in paragraph form, and then try to pass that off as an ESSAY!

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your literary critique will be evaluated using the following rubric, which must be turned in with your final, typed, paper copy on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Your critique must ALSO be posted to your blog AND submitted to turnitin.com.**

**Reading, Writing, and Communicating Standard:**

Write arguments to **support claims** in an **analysis of substantive** topics or **texts**, using valid reasoning and **relevant and sufficient evidence**.

Literary Critique—Evaluation Rubric—2nd opportunity Points earned \_\_\_\_\_\_/65

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rubric Category | Exceeds Standards  4 | Meets Standards  3 | Approaching Standards  2 | Below Standards  1 |
| Introduce a precise claim and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim, reasons, and evidence. (x5) | The claim addresses the piece of writing and focuses on your personal opinion about its value. It is engaging and sophisticated and is clearly established and sustained throughout the critique.  There are more than three supporting details and examples from the piece of writing you are critiquing, and all are skillfully blended into context sentences. | The claim addresses the piece of writing and focuses on your personal opinion about its value. It is clearly established and sustained.  There are at least three supporting details and examples from the piece of writing you are critiquing and most are blended into context sentences. | Claim is lacking or hard to find; the writer struggles with establishing a point of view.  There are fewer than three supporting details and examples from the piece of writing you are critiquing, or the details and examples are out of context or do not blend into the context sentences. |  |
| Refine the expression of voice and tone in a text by selecting and using appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure, and sentence organization. (x5) | Precise, vivid, natural language creates a clear and complete picture in the reader’s mind. Powerful verbs, precise nouns, appropriate adjectives, and phrases enhance meaning. Original phrasing and memorable language prompt reflective thoughts and insights.  Sentences vary in beginnings, length, and structure. Sentences sound smooth and rhythmic when read aloud; they invite expressive reading. | Correct, adequate word choice creates a clear picture in the reader’s mind; lively verbs, specific nouns, and appropriate adjectives and phrases add to the meaning; colorful language and unusual phrasing encourage reflection.  Sentences vary in beginnings, length, and structure. Most sentences sound smooth and rhythmic when read aloud. | Ordinary word choice attempts to create a picture in the reader’s mind. Verbs, nouns, adjectives, and phrases are adequate. Language choice and phrasing lack inspiration.  Sentences offer some variety in beginnings, length, and structure. They follow a predictable pattern and rhythm when read aloud. |  |
| Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (x5) | There are no errors in grammar, mechanics or spelling. | Minimal errors in grammar, mechanics or spelling do not detract from the work. | Errors in grammar, mechanics or spelling detract from the work. |  |
| Use technology to produce and publish work. (x3) | The finished appearance is of superior quality. The critique is posted to your blog. | Presentation/formatting is standard and predictable. The critique is posted to your blog. | Presentation/formatting confuses the message. The critique is not posted to your blog. |  |

## Writing Introductions—Three Ways to “Hook” the Reader

In an ancient story, the city of Thebes was tormented by a monster with the body of a lion and the upper torso of a woman. The monster, known as the Sphinx, lay on the top of a rock along the roadside and challenged travelers with a riddle. Those who solved the riddle were allowed to pass, but those who failed were killed.

Undaunted by the failure of every one of his predecessors, the hero Oedipus stepped forward bravely to take the challenge. The Sphinx asked, “What animal goes on four feet in the morning, two at noon, and on three in the evening?”

Fearless, Oedipus replied, “Man. In childhood, he creeps on hands and knees. In manhood, he walks erect. In old age, he walks with the aid of a cane.”

Mortified by Oedipus’ correct answer, the Sphinx cast herself down from the rock and perished.

When presented with a riddle like the one in the anecdote above, it is human nature to want to know the answer. As a writer, you too can capitalize on human curiosity to compel your reader to read on. There are many techniques that will get your essay off to a great start for both you and your reader.

Imagine that a student is given this writing assignment: **If you had to eat one food every day, what would it be**? She thinks for a moment and writes: ***I would like to eat hamburgers every day because they are good***.

This beginning doesn’t exactly inspire the reader to keep reading. Worse, it provides little for the writer herself to get excited about. It does answer the question, and it does provide a focus for an essay, but the weak opening provides little promise for much else.

Here are three tips the writer could have used to write a more interesting introduction:

1. Begin with conflict.
2. Begin with mystery.
3. Begin with metaphor.

First impressions are important. A good “hook” in the introduction will grab your reader’s interest. It will also help you, the writer, think creatively and produce more than just a dull, ordinary essay.

For each essay question listed below, two introductory sentences are provided. Circle the letter that you think makes the most interesting hook.

**Question**: What section of the newspaper do you think is the most enjoyable to read?

1. My brother and I always fight over the sports section. While reading the paper, I always sit with my back to a wall to avoid an unexpected attack.
2. The section of the newspaper that I like to read is the sports section.

**Question**: What are things a person should not do during a speech?

1. When giving a speech, people should never put their hands in their mouth.
2. In surveys taken about people’s biggest fears, fear of giving a speech often rates above the fear of death.

**Question**: What is your favorite book? What are the reasons that everyone should read it?

1. Groucho Marx once said, “Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend; inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read anyway.”
2. Books are a very important part of many people’s lives.

**Write two introductory sentences to answer the following question. Write one that is interesting and one that answers the question but is not very interesting.**

**Question:** If you had to eat one food every day, what would it be?

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## Beginning with Conflict

Human beings love conflict. If you have ever seen the way heads turn in a public place when two or more people raise their voices in anger at each other, you’ve witnessed firsthand how conflict attracts attention. At the root of every story, whether fiction or non-fiction, is some kind of conflict. It may be an **internal conflict**, as when a character is struggling about whether or not to tell someone the truth. It may also be an **external conflict**, as when two neighbors are battling about a fence, or a hiker is battling an unexpected snowstorm.

Opening your essay with a conflict taps into your readers’ innate curiosity. It also forces you to write about specific and concrete people, places, and things.

Examples:

**Question**: If you had to eat one food every day, what would it be?

**Conflict hook**: My family always gets into an argument when we try to decide what kind of pizza to order.

**Question:** What one section of the newspaper do you think is the most enjoyable to read?

**Conflict hook**: My brother and I always fight over the sports section. While reading the paper, I always sit with my back to a wall to avoid an unexpected attack.

Write a conflict hook of at least one complete sentence for your critique of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Beginning with Mystery***

Like a good game of poker, the key to using a “mystery” hook is not to show your hand too soon. In other words, you delay telling the reader what your topic is. You want your reader to **want** to read on, to **need** to read on.

The simple technique for writing this kind of introduction is to use pronouns instead of the name of your topic, until the end of the introduction. Here are two examples:

**It’s the kind of food one could eat every day of the year and twice on Monday.**

**It’s the kind of food that is impossible to cook badly. It’s the kind of food that even**

**fussy children never complain about. This essential food is, of course, pizza.**

**Without this section of the newspaper, many people could not start their morning.**

**They would be without conversation topics for the day. They would have nothing funny to**

**tape into their notebooks or inside their lockers. They would not be able to start their**

**day with a smile. This most enjoyable section of the newspaper is the comics.**

Write an introduction with a mystery hook for your critique of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Use information from the text or from your knowledge of the Scottsboro boys to help you create the introduction.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Beginning with Metaphor

A metaphor is comparison of two unlike things. What two unlike things are compared in the following metaphor?

**Success is a fish that is elusive and difficult to catch, swimming in the murky depths of the future**.

Metaphors can help both you and your readers to see things in a new way. When you use a metaphor in your introduction, readers quickly see that you are not using a boring approach to your topic. Even if they don’t necessarily agree with your comparison, they will be interested enough to keep reading.

Here are three examples of metaphors about the topic of “words”:

Words are legs.

Words are corn.

Words are circus animals.

The three metaphors are not quite complete and don’t really make much sense. It is the writer’s responsibility to make the connection between the two unlike nouns. In other words, the writer must **make** the strange comparison make sense.

Below, the three metaphors have been completed. The writers have taken two things that seem to have no relationship whatsoever and made a connection that helps readers to see “words” in a new way.

**Words are the legs of the mind; they bear it about, carry it from point to point,**

**bed it down at night, and keep it off the ground and out of the marsh and mists. (Richard Eder)**

**Language is a growing thing that, like a corn crop, has many uses. As a staple, corn feeds people, horses, and hogs; language also serves utilitarian ends. As a colorless liquid, corn intoxicates. So does language, fermented in a sermon, distilled in a song or a story. Corn was made for people, not the other way around. So too with language. (Jim Wayne Miller)**

**Words are as recalcitrant as circus animals, and the unskilled trainer**

**can crack his whip at them in vain. (Gerald Brenan)**

To create metaphors, practice the three-step process that follows. If you keep at it, you’ll discover that the human mind has an amazing ability to hold onto two contradictory ideas at the same time and manipulate the two ideas so that they become remarkably similar.

**How to create a metaphor in three steps:**

**Step 1**: Begin with your topic.

Example: **Monday**

**Step 2**: Compare your topic to another unrelated noun.

Example: **Monday is soup**.

**Step 3**: Connect the two topics. Elaborate by answering *Who? What? Where? Why?* or *How?*

Example: **Monday is a thick, spicy soup that’s hard to swallow, but its nourishing stock fortifies us for the week.**

**More on figurative language**

In addition to metaphor, there are two other types of figurative language that you might use to introduce your essay: **simile** and **personification**.

A **simile** is like a metaphor except that it uses the words *like* or *as* to compare two unlike things. **Pizza is like a sunny summer afternoon at the lake; it’s never an unpleasant experience.**

**Personification** refers to describing an animal, object, or idea as if it were a person. To create personification, you must first select words that are normally used to describe a person or a person’s actions. Then use these words to describe the animal, object, or idea.

**Examples**:

* Procrastination always causes problems that jump out of the bushes to scare people when they least expect it.
* Monday morning always arrives at the door too early and knocks loudly until someone is forced to get up and acknowledge its existence.

Like metaphors, similes and personification are effective as tools to introduce your topic because they force you and your reader to look at the topic in a new and different way. (You can also use figurative language anywhere else in your writing; it’s not just for introductions.)

Write an introduction with a hook that contains a metaphor, a simile, or personification for your *To Kill a Mockingbird* critique here:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Three more ways to “hook” the reader**

Using conflict, mystery, and metaphor are not the only ways to begin an essay. Here are three other possible alternatives:

**Anecdote hook:** The anecdote hook relies on a story to hook the reader. Because people like stories, using a specific, short anecdote is a great way to capture your reader’s interest. For example, if you are writing about public speaking or Thanksgiving, you might relate an anecdote about former Secretary of State William M. Evarts. He began a Thanksgiving dinner speech by saying, “You have been giving your attention to a turkey stuffed with sage; you are now about to consider a sage stuffed with turkey.”

**Startling fact or statistic:** Another good hook is a startling fact or statistic that captures the curiosity of your reader.

**Each year, major league baseball uses the skins of 45,000 cows to create its baseballs.**

**Quotation hook:** An interesting or humorous quotation that relates to your topic is a good way to hook your reader. For example, if you were writing about one of your favorite books, you might use this quote by Groucho Marx: “Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend; inside of a dog it’s too dark to read anyway.”

Write three different introductory “hooks”: one with an anecdote, one with a startling fact or statistic, and one with a quotation for your review of *The Miracle Worker*. Use your own paper if necessary.

**Three Ways to Finish**

**Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty we are free at last.** (Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech)

**The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living breath and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by better angels of our nature.** (Abraham Lincoln’s first inaugural address)

**I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!** (Patrick Henry before the Virginia Convention)

Each of the quotes above is from a famous speech. The lines are the concluding lines of each speech.

Memory experts say that the human brain is most likely to retain the last thing it hears or reads. Therefore, whether you are writing a speech or an essay, it is important to finish strong. In the quotes above, the speakers wanted to leave their audiences with words that echo in the memory, words that smoothly bring their speeches to a close, and words that clearly and concisely sum up their main points.

Finding the perfect words to wrap up your essay can be challenging, but the following strategies will help.

* 1. **Use signal words**. If you were driving on a highway that was coming to an end, you would hope for a road sign letting you know. The same is true with an essay. It’s a good idea to give your reader a sign that you are about to wrap things up. Signal words like **finally, definitely,** and **obviously** are good signs to let your reader know that you are about to finish.
  2. **Rephrase your thesis**. The key word here is **rephrase.** Don’t just repeat or restate your thesis; instead, say it in a different way.

**Example**:

**Original Thesis**: Every child should have a pet because pets provide companionship, teach compassion, and encourage responsibility.

**Rephrased Thesis**: Companionship, compassion, and responsibility are three things that parents can give their children in the form of a warm, cuddly, and furry friend.

* 1. **Come full circle**. One excellent way to bring your essay to a smooth finish is to end where you began. Look back at the hook you used to introduce your essay and give some thought to how you might tie the end of your essay to the beginning. For example, if you began with an anecdote, you might refer to that anecdote again in the conclusion. This gives the reader the satisfying feeling of having come full circle.

Read the paragraphs below, which are the introduction and the conclusion to an essay about the benefits of the game of chess. Notice how the conclusion is tied to the introduction so that it brings the reader full circle.

**Introduction**

She is in control. She is the leader, and the success or failure of her realm depends on her ability to think, adapt, plan ahead, and execute. Is she an international diplomat, the CEO of a major corporation, or a field general leading troops into battle? She may be someday, but right now she is a child playing a game of chess. Chess has proven benefits for young people. It exercises their brains, improves their academic performance, and teaches them positive social skills.

**Conclusion**

Lastly, though some parents think it is the computer that is the key to preparing their children for the rigors of the 21st century, others turn to chess and its promise of increased brain power, increased success in school, and increased social skills. These parents know that the ancient game of kings and queens might help their child someday become a success—perhaps even as a future diplomat, a CEO, or a field general.

Choose one of the introductions you wrote previously. Write a conclusion in which you use signal words, rephrase the claim, and bring the reader full circle.